

Image Processing in Photoshop Elements 2.0 & 3.0

Please note that this is just my take on the process that I have picked up from other photographers that have helped me along the way. I have combined all their processing to come up with this step by step guide to processing your photos. Like I said it's a guide and don't be afraid to tweak the process a bit. This, from what I can gather is the general process that most photographers use. There are a few photographers I must thank, Eduard (IL76), Dimitris, Mick Bajcar (Dendrobatid) and Paul Markman (Psych) for all their help.

There are small variations between Elements 2.0 and 3.0 so where there are I will put each path in and in brackets denote whether it's for Elements 2.0 or 3.0.
e.g. (2.0) Image>Adjustments>Equalize; (3.0) Filter>Adjustments>Equalize

My equipment is a bit expensive but that doesn't mean I always take good shots. No matter what camera you have, Digital that is, if the light is low, dull day, you're not going to get great shots. Sometimes it can't be avoided but if the weather is dull and overcast, I don't bother going out, and I have some of the best Canon lenses around, Canon 70-200mm f2.8 LIS, 300mm f4 LIS, Sigma 24-70mm f2.8 DG EX, and a Canon 1.4 converter. You still get horrible shots when the weather is dull. You **can** get photos on A.net with a point and shoot camera, you are just limited to what you can do that's all. You just need to get a lot closer to your subject and that it doesn't move too fast and you have good light! You should always shoot with the max size, large and fine, fill the frame with the aircraft. If I want a head on shot with only the engines then I try to get that shot in the frame the way you want it on a.net, but leave a little extra for levelling and cropping. I try to do as much of my cropping in the frame/camera as I can, that way when I get the photo into PS, I resize almost the whole frame/photo. I resize to 1024 x 683. Also I wouldn't use digital zoom on a point and shoot camera, you start to lose quality if you do. Only use the optical zoom. When I crop my photo I go into the resize and look at the actual size of the cropped photo and if the size is almost double of the size I want to get to then I know that it's going to be a reasonable good photo. I'm not sure if this is all making sense. OK when you look at your photo in the back of your camera it looks good doesn't it. Then you look at it on the PC and see just how bad they are. You always improve the quality when you down size your photo and the more you downsize the better. There is no need to upload photos bigger than 1024 x ***, the reason I say that is because most monitors are 1024 x *** and if you want to look at a photo bigger than that you would need to use the scroll bar on the side to view the whole picture, also bigger size means that you will show up more detail and more grain and bad quality and run a higher risk of a rejection. Check the Photography forum for all the different sizes, Peter has posted a thread on the acceptable/preferred sizes for A.net.

Right I think I have gone on enough about sizes.

Now you've taken your shot and want to process it. I suggest starting off with photos with the whole aircraft and then work onto nose and tails etc. It's up to yourself but what I mean is start with the simple shots and work from there, i.e. boring side on's as some call them.

Before you start there is a window, actually called a Pallet Bin on the right that you can bring out and in that you can see your history, i.e. all the changes that you have

done to the photo and if for example you make a mistake or do something you don't like you can just click on the previous step to undo what you have just done. By pressing F7 this will bring up the side window and press it again will minimise it. The only down side is that you it is in view it takes up a bit of space and therefore you can't view the photo it its entirety. 2.0 has it at the top right of the page.

Take Note, after Step 2, all processing must be done at viewing the photo at 100% I usually level and crop at around 50% or less sometimes.

Step 1. Levelling Level the photo, make sure that all the verticals are straight, you can do this by grabbing the photo with the hand tool and moving it from side to side and checking them against the side bar of the monitor. Elements also have a grid which you can use.

Elements also has a grid (**View > Grid**), which you can use. The grid can be set to different settings (colour, style & spacing) via **Edit > Preferences > Grid**. This facility can then be used in conjunction with **Image > Rotate > Custom**, where the image can be rotated in small increments left or right until the verticals and/or horizontal are near perfect. If there are no verticals then check that the runway is level the fence at the back or the hedge is horizontal or you can use the runway signs for levelling too. This is a big controversy on A.net as many experienced photographers have had rejections and yet things are level and straight. It's all what it looks like. Check the forums and you will see the posts on this subject. I get them but thankfully they are few and far between now.

Step 2. Cropping. Now you need to crop. I put these two figures in, 14.45cm x 9.64cm This helps to keep your 3:2 ratio. Don't ask me how I got those figures but they work for me. Some photographers just put 3 and 2 respectively in each of the boxes, it pretty much the same I think. Don't put anything in the resolution box. Once you have cropped then go into **Image>resize**.

There you will fill in 1024 x 683 in the pixels box. Actually you will see that when you fill 1024 that the other will automatically change to 683 as it's locked into the other dimension.

Step 3 Checking for Dust Spots

Before I continue on any further I will now check for dust spots using the advanced method. The reason for this is that when you do all your enhancement it's after you have cleaned up the spots and the repair will be covered up. Sometimes you can cause a mark from healing out the spots. I now include a check for spots on every photo that I process. To check that your sensor hasn't any spots, change the aperture to f22 and shoot some clear blue sky. Bring the image into PS and equalize the photo and you will hopefully see no spots. If you do then you can clean your sensor. You can clean it yourself or you can take it into the store and ask them to clean it. Below are two links on how to clean you sensor. I won't take any part in this as it is totally up to you what you want to do, I am just providing info for your convenience.

http://www.pbase.com/copperhill/ccd_cleaning

This site is where you can also buy some of the cleaning equipment, Click on Digital>Cleaning and there you will find what you need.

<http://www.warehouseexpress.com/>

Dust Spots, i.e. Dirt on the CMOS sensor and you need to get rid of them before you upload. Apply this method after Step 2.

To make sure that you have none or want to see them all then you need to equalize the photo. In Elements 2.0 & 3.0 this can be found here,

(3.0) Filter>Adjustments>Equalize, (2.0) Image>Adjustments>Equalize, I won't need to tell you much more as they will stand out like a sore thumb, you can't miss them as they will be round, just be careful you don't start rubbing out the clouds.

Simple Method:

You can use the clone tool and simply clone them out, straight forward enough there. You will need to look at your History Window and you can do this by pressing F7 and this will allow you to view the History. I still haven't figured out how to clear the Equalized photo other than clicking the previous step before the Equalize in the History. You will need to try and see where they are and clone on the non Equalized photo. Keep checking that you have got rid of all your dust spots by Equalizing and going a step back to clone them out. You will have to clone these spots out in the non Equalized photo.

Advance Method (Thanks to Wietse for this method)

I personally use this method and find it very good

1. Create a duplicate layer, **Layer> Duplicate layer**, it may help to call this new layer by another name, say USM
2. Press F7 to bring up the layers window, this will appear to the right of your screen
3. Select the new "Background Copy" (USM) layer (just click on the name)
4. Now equalize, **(3.0) Filter> Adjustments>Equalise, (2.0) Image>Adjustments>Equalize**
5. Select the "Background layer" Not the 'Background Copy, (USM). You will still see the equalised image, but all editing you do is done on the original layer.
6. Select heal tool, you will need to set the heal tool so press 'Alt' and click, (left click) near the spot in question, do this for each spot.
7. Heal the dust spots on the image. You will not see the spots disappear, but they do disappear on the original image. Remember which ones you did already. If you healed all dust spots, -> step 8.
8. Now delete the Background Copy" Select the Background Copy (USM) by clicking on it and then delete, **Layer>Delete Layer**
9. You should now have the original image with the spots removed and the Equalized gone as well.

Step 4. Image Enhancement.

Remember to change the view to 100%

Click on **(3.0) Enhance>Adjust Lighting>levels, (2.0) Enhance>Adjust Brightness/Contrast>Levels**

Here you will see a Histogram of the cropped photo, underneath the histogram will be two black arrows/triangles at each end of the histogram, move these two till they just meet the edge of the histogram, you will see the image brighten up a good bit, sometimes the photo will darken a bit if its taken in very bright conditions. You can

also move the middle triangle left or right till you feel that the photo is at a good exposure. It's not always necessary to brighten your photo, on occasion I have darkened my shot a little and it has turned out better, the colours on the fuselage show up better and even some of the grain is hidden. In the Adjust lighting you will also see Shadows and Highlights, here you can darken the highlights a bit if they're too bright, especially on white/bright painted planes where the sun is hitting the fuselage. You can also brighten up shadows, this can be useful if your plane is a bit back-lit, but be careful with this as too much adjustment can cause grain in the shadow areas.

Now click on **Enhance>Adjust Colour >Hue and Saturation**. This is where you can bring out the colours in the photo especially reds and greens. Move the middle slider 'Saturation' to the right till it reads about 12-18. This is dependant on the image itself. Sometimes I don't even use the Saturation as it causes too much grain, especially on the green on the Aer Lingus planes. With most Aer Lingus planes I only use about 5-9. Be careful how much you use as too much can damage the photo. All you want to do is bring out the colour, enhance it a bit, that's all!! Say ok to that.

Step 5. Image Sharpening.

If you have some sky in your shot, which most photos do, then you **don't** want to sharpen the sky. Why do so? There is nothing there to sharpen. This method is used to select the plane and sharpen the plane only, but you have to go about it in a reverse way. Select the magic wand and with a threshold of 10 click on the sky. Now, not all of the sky will be selected, so press and hold the shift key down. Now click on the parts of the sky that are not selected and you will see the dotted line expand. Once all of the sky is selected, with the cursor over the selected area right click, and on the drop down menu click on '**Select Inverse**'. This method will also help you avoid the use of Neat Image. Neat Image is a good program only if used carefully and in the right way. When your grass starts to look like a plastic sheet then you are running into problems. One tip to avoid affecting the grass is adjust the green levels on the right to 0 or less and you will notice that the grass will still look ok after NI, but try to avoid this program.

Now you have the plane and maybe grass and buildings selected, these you want to sharpen, not the sky! From the menus click **Select>Modify>Expand** and expand by 1 pixel. Now apply Unsharp Mask, **Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask**, (USM), with these levels, 50%; Radius 0.3; Threshold 0. Apply once and then create a Duplicate Layer, **Layer>Duplicate Layer**. Now expand by 1 pixel again and apply the same USM. Expand again and sharpen. Now you have two layers, one with 1 USM and the other with 3 USM's. Three may be too much, but I have rarely used 2 USM. The odd time I have used 4 USM's on the Duplicate layer if it's a bit soft still, try another USM but be careful of over doing it, a lot of photographers fall down here. Select the rubber at 100% Opacity and begin to rub out the jaggies, these are always on the edge of the flaps top of fuselage and under the tail and logos. Recently I have also started to rub out the grain caused by USM on the body of the planes usually certain colours cause this like green and grey.

(There are many different settings for USM, some use 500; 0.2; 0 for the first sweep and then reduce the 500 down to 100-300 for the second sweep. I have tried this and can't quite grasp it. I am comfortable with my own settings of 50; 0.3; 0 Play around with the settings till you think you have it. I have used 100; 0.3; 0 on two of my photos but that's all. Some use a threshold of about 2-4.)

Once you are happy that all the jaggies are gone, well as best as you can, then go to **Layer>Flatten Image**. Now select the Magic Wand again and place the cursor over the plane, (selected area), as the sky is not selected, and click, left click that is, and now the selection has been deselected, i.e. the moving dotted line will disappear.

Step 6. Saving Now you can save the file. You should try to use a name that you will be familiar with, I use the registration then my name. So a file of an Aer Lingus plane could look like this, ei-dei-1-fmc. The -1 is in case I do another photo of the same plane but different process or just a different photo taken on a different day at a different angle etc. etc.. It's up to you how you want to name them but try and put your initials at the end that way making it unique to you and you don't clash with another person.

When you save, save at max, 12, lowest compression. Sometimes even that can still leave you with a large file bigger than 1mb, if that's the case then reduce the figure to 11 or even 10, it will still save your file with little compression but reduce the size enough for A.Net.

You will develop your own method and tricks. I use this method, well it's about 95% accurate and it works well for me. The new lenses have helped a huge amount to my acceptance rate which is about 76% now but you still have to process your photos no matter what lens or camera you have.

Step 7. Uploading your photos.

Always use the Auto Complete Function at the top of the page. This will insert the all the necessary data into the relevant boxes. When it comes to multiple aircraft and c/n No's click on the photos that are provided and note the info that is relevant to your photo. Sometimes the photos will not appear and that's because you haven't selected any data.

If you have an aircraft that isn't on the DB then do a search for as much info as you can possibly find. A thread was started by Malandan on web sites that have info on all types of planes. When you find the correct info, fill in all the boxes and also when you confirm the submission, paste the web address where you got the info from in the Comments to screeners box, so that they can verify it all. Also when confirming all the info make sure that it is correct, i.e. that it is an airline and not a cargo or single engine prop, that its is the whole aircraft and not a tail etc. etc. Be sure to check that everything is correct, there is nothing worse than waiting a few days or a week and to get a rejection for bad category and having to start all over again. If you have a new aircraft and stil¹⁸⁹⁹⁵⁵⁶ need a little help you can post in the Photography forum or send an e-mail to the editors, editors@airliners.net they will be happy to help out and will also make the screeners' job a bit easier.

Good luck and let me know how you get on and if there is anything that may need to be changed on this doc.

OK so that's it you're done, hope this helps you. Give me a shout if you need any clarification on any bit here.

Take care

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